

Testimony of April Raczka, MS MFT  
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860.225.2681 ext.211  
Submitted to the Public Health Committee  
February 11, 2009

*HB 6361 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SEXUAL ASSAULT  
FORENSIC EXAMINERS PROGRAM*

Senator Harris, Representative Ritter, and members of the Public Health Committee, my name is April Raczka. I am the Director of the New Britain and Hartford Sexual Assault Crisis Service and a state certified Sexual Assault Crisis Counselor/Advocate. I am testifying in support of funding to launch a State SANE/SAFE program.

The YWCA New Britain Sexual Assault Crisis Service provides services to all towns in Hartford County plus Plymouth and part of Tolland County, including responding directly to 14 hospitals throughout the state. I have worked with this agency for over 8 years and have personally accompanied over 30 victims at local hospitals in our service area while they are having evidence collected as part of the sexual assault examination kit. I can not stress enough the necessity of installing a state funded rapid response program in Connecticut.

All survivors of sexual assault deserve access to specially trained medical personnel following the trauma of a sexual assault. After someone has been assaulted, they should not have to worry that when they seek medical services they will not receive the best standard of care. Implementation of a statewide 24-hour program would ensure effective, collaborative, and prompt care.

HB 6361 is of tremendous concern to Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Centers such as Hartford county SACS. Our Advocates and volunteers work closely with SANEs to ensure efficient and timely care is given to victims. While SANEs are trained in a unique way, they provide an essential piece to the process of prosecution and medical attention. Rapid response is crucial since victims only have 72 hours following an assault to have evidence collected.

It is unfortunate that all too often I have accompanied clients at hospitals with nurses who are not SANE trained. When there is not a SANE available it causes the process to be quite lengthy (a process that may take four to six hours has taken up to eight hours and sometimes more). It has been my experience that nurses who are not trained are quite uncomfortable with performing this exam and

collection of DNA. This in turn can cause the collection of DNA to be inaccurately collected and therefore affect the outcome of a case.

If you would like to further discuss this with me I may be contacted at 860.225.4681 ext.211.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,  
April Raczka, MS MFT  
Director, SACS- New Britain/Hartford Region  
YWCA New Britain